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as the presiding god, who, at the end, transformed himself into the sun, while jaguars ate up the men and giants who then populated the earth. Quetzalcoatl was the divine ruler of the second era, Four Wind, at the expiration of which hurricanes destroyed the world and men were turned into monkeys. The Rain God, Tlaloc, gave the world light in the third epoch, Four Rain, brought to a close by a fiery rain. Chalchihuitlicue,* "Our Lady of the Turquoise Skirt," was a Water Goddess who presided appropriately over the fourth Sun, Four Water, wherein a flood came, transforming men into fish. Our present age, Four Earthquake, is under the control of the Sun God, Tonatiuh, and it will be destroyed, in time, by earthquakes.[2] (See Plate 52.)

While the versions vary from place to place, we seem to have a recapitulation of the great disasters from flood, volcanic eruption, hurricanes and earthquakes that beset the communities of ancient Mexico. Also there is a reflection of the order in which the gods attained prominence in the local worship. In the history of the Mexican tribes there are references to struggles within single towns between the devotees of two cults, as to which would have the mastery.[3]

The universe itself was conceived in a religious rather than a geographic sense and was divided horizontally and vertically into areas of religious significance. The horizontal universe, possibly the older concept, recognized five directions, the four cardinal points and the center. The Fire God, old and fundamental in Mexican religion, controlled the central zone. The east was assigned to the Rain God, Tlaloc, and the Cloud God, Mixcoatl (Cloud Snake), and was a region of abundance. In this idea geography was combined with

*Chal-chee-we'et-le-kway.

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772 ritual, since the intensely fertile Vera Cruz coast plain is the
776 actual source of the seasonal rains caused by the condensa-
823 tion of warm air when the Gulf of Mexico is exposed to the chill winds of the Central Plateau. The south was considered evil, possibly because of the arid zones south of Morelos and Puebla, but had as presiding deities gods associated with spring and flowers, Xipe (the Flayed One) and Macuilxochitl* (Five Flower). The west, however, had a favorable significance, being the home of the planet Venus, the evening star, which was associated and even identified with Quetzalcoatl (Feathered Serpent), the God of Knowledge. The north was a place gloomy and awful, presided over by Mictlantecuhtli† (Lord of the Dead), who, in one of those contradictions so frequent in Mexican theology, was sometimes connected with the south as well.[4] (See end papers.)

772 The vertical world was divided into heavens and hells
776 which had no moral significance, being merely overworlds
775 and underworlds. The number of heavens varied up to thirteen and represented the dwelling places of the gods, according to their rank in the hierarchy, the original creator living in the topmost heaven, and so on down the scale. One of these heavens belonged to Tlaloc, who received those who died by drowning, lightning or other causes connected with water. One school of thought divided the heavens into east
[821] and west, according to the passage of the sun. The east was the home of warriors, whose death in battle or sacrifice nourished the sun, and the west the home of women who died in childbirth, thus sacrificing themselves in the bearing of potential warriors.[5] (See Plate 57, bottom right.)

775 The rest of the dead passed to Mictlan, the underworld.

*Ma-kweel-tho'-chitl. †Meek-tla'n-tay-coot-li.

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They had to overcome several hazards before they could take up their life there, so they were equipped with charms and gifts for the journey, which took the sacred number of four days. The wayfarer had to travel between two mountains which threatened to crush him, avoid first a snake and then a monstrous alligator, cross eight deserts, surmount eight hills and endure a freezing wind which hurled stones and obsidian knives upon him. Then he reached a broad river which he crossed on the back of a little red dog, sometimes included in the grave furniture for the purpose. Finally arriving at his destination, the traveler offered gifts to the Lord of the Dead, who assigned him to one of nine different regions. Some versions make the dead spend a probationary period of four years in the nine hells before they take up their life in Mictlan, which was, like the Greek Hades, devoid of moral significance.*

The Aztecs, as we have said, conceived of their universe as extending horizontally outward and vertically upward and downward. The world, as horizontally divided, implied the association of divine powers with the phenomena of geography and climate. This significance of direction is a familiar religious concept. The vertical arrangement of the heavens had rather more to do with rank and order than with a realization of natural phenomena. The hierarchy of the Christian saints, with its implicit recognition of position and authority, approaches closely to the point of view with which the Aztec peoples regarded their gods. Aztec and ritualized Christian worship have much the same attitude toward distinctions between philosophy and practice, and between the point of view of the instructed theologian and the humble worshipers.